

A
S P E E C H
Against the
B I L L,
Brought into the
House of Commons,
For R E C R U I T I N G
Her Majesty's Land Forces.

Mr. S P E A K E R,

THE fatal Consequences of all Arbitrary Power, are generally Oppression and Slavery, which dismal Effects are the same whether they be felt under an *English, French, Dutch* or *Spanish* Government; for the Nature of all Tyranny in it self is alike, let it be exercised where and by what Authority soever: But if there be any Difference in the Grievance of it, it will appear to be most unnatural when used and settled by a Power that ought to be the strongest Bulwark against it; if there-

therefore the Liberty of the Subject be restrained, forced, and taken away by Consent of the Peoples Representatives, the Guardians of it, the Loss of it will certainly seem to be so much the more intolerable, by how much the more it is their Duty and their Interest to defend and preserve the Peoples Rights entire from all Violence.

Under every free and just Government the People enjoy an equal Right in the Liberty of their Person and Estate, and have one and the same common Benefit of the same Law; where and to whomsoever this Justice is denied, I am sure the People must fall under the heaviest Tyranny, Oppression and Slavery in the World.

That this Bill, as now brought into the House, does restrain and deprive the much greater and more industrious Part of the People of that Freedom and Property which the rest of their Fellow-Subjects enjoy, is very plain and evident, by the Exceptions of such Persons as are only exempted from being forced from their Country, their Wives and their Children, into Foreign Service: The Persons only excepted, I find are Clergymen, the Scholars of the Two Universities, the Students of the Inns of Court, all Freeholders and Copyholders, and their Sons that have Land to the Yearly Value of —, or that did pay to the late Subsidy Act; all Electors and Voters for any County, City or Borough; so that all Apprentices and Servants, all Grasiers, Farmers, Labourers, and all other Persons whatsoever, not exempted by the Qualifications above-specified (which extend not to one Third of the People of *England*) are liable to be banish'd their Country, and forced from their Masters and their Families, without any Limitation of Time, and almost Hopes of Return; whilst every small Freeholder and Copyholder, every corrupt Voter and Elector of any City or Borough (of whom a great Number might of all People be the best spared) shall stay at Home in Luxury, Sloth, and all the other Crimes that attend our Elections; so that the best Consequence that can be expected of this Bill, will be, that all Cities and Boroughs will be crowded with the most idle Persons of the Country, who are able at any Rate, or by any Way to
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make themselves Voters, in order to exempt themselves from the Fatigue and Danger of War; and the Country by this Means will be drain'd and depriv'd of Servants, Farmers and Labourers, who are the most laborious and necessary Persons of the Commonwealth, to till and cultivate the Land.

It is impossible, Mr. Speaker, to foresee all the fatal Consequences of this Bill: One of the greatest Shocks that ever happen'd to the *Roman* State was from their Slaves, who took up Arms to recover the Liberty of their Persons, the Rebellion of *Naples*, and several other dangerous Popular Insurrections, both in our own and Neighbouring States, have been the Effects of less Causes. How can it then be thought, that Freeborn *English* Men, without the least Accusation or Suspicion of a Crime, will patiently endure to be condemn'd to Death, or perpetual Slavery?

Lucius Manlius, the Dictator, having, contrary to the Custom of the *Romans* from the Foundation of their State to his Time, caused some Persons to be whipp'd, and others to be imprison'd, for refusing to Lift themselves, was accused before the People as guilty of the highest Crime, and had certainly suffer'd Death, or some other exemplary Punishment, but that his Son going privately arm'd to the Tribune of the People, threatned and resolv'd his Death, till the Tribune was forced solemnly to swear he would drop the Accusation.

The Usage of the Soldiers has been very hard and severe, and this Bill will certainly make it worse; for what Concern can it be thought the Officers will have for their Men, when they are sensible they must be supply'd by the Country, without any Charge or Trouble to themselves. I must here take Notice, that this great Oppression is not restrain'd only to recruit Her Majesty's Army in the *Netherlands*, but Her Forces in general; so that Persons thus constrain'd may be sent into either of the *Indies*, as well as into the *Low-Countries*; a Hardship beyond Expression. In my Opinion, Mr. Speaker, this is a ready Way to depopulate the Land, to sell the Lives of our Subjects, and to establish and confirm, or at least promote the Sale of them both at Home and Abroad, by a Law in which there is not any Strain of Popular Applause.

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It was generally expected, that at least the Design of this Bill should have been specious and plausible; that it should only have rid and eased the Country of loose, idle and disorderly Persons, who are a Pest and Burthen to a Commonwealth; but had due Care been taken to put so fair a Gloss upon it, I am afraid it would have proved in the End as false and as fatal to us, as the Justice of the *Lacedaemonians* did to the *Athenians*, who, after the Reduction of *Athens* under their Power, first began to put to Death only such Persons as were obnoxious to the People; but after the Establishment of their Tyranny, the best of Citizens suffer'd, and were executed with the rest. This also was *Sylla's* Maxim, when he had subdued the Liberty of *Rome*; *Damasippus*, a cruel Favourer of *Marius*, was thought to suffer as a worthy Example of his Justice, and his Death was attended with the loud Applause and Acclamations of the People: But it was soon found, that his Punishment was only a specious Pretence and a plausible Beginning to that succeeding Slaughter with which he fill'd the *Senate* and the *Forum*. The Promoters of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, are not Masters of such refin'd Politicks; they have not endeavour'd to conceal, or put any Colour upon their Intentions, but have at once discover'd what they always in their Hearts design'd should be the Practices of it when obtain'd, upon what Pretence soever.

The Difficulties of proportioning the Number each County or Parish is to find, as well as where to lodge the Coercive Power, are so many, and so great, that they seem to be almost insuperable; so that I shall not enter into those Particulars, but agree with the Sentiments of this House upon another Occasion, That the Promoting the Interest of this Bill in general does directly tend to subject the Rights of the Commons of *England* to an illegal and Arbitrary Power; and therefore desire, that it may be left to be the Act of a more Arbitrary King or Queen, and a more Servile House of Commons.